

## ***Steps to Adoption:***

### **Step 1: Initial Contact**

When you call 1-800-DO-ADOPT, the Adoption Resource Exchange of Virginia, you have taken the first step in the adoption process. After a few general questions, you may be referred to a local department of social services, or a to a private child placing agency for orientation.

### **Step2: Orientation**

You will be invited to a meeting to learn more about the types of children waiting for adoptive families and about the adoption process. This may be a group meeting with other families who are interested in adoption, or may be an individual meeting with the agency social worker. Feel free to ask questions. This is a time for you to get some of your questions answered.

### **Step 3: Training**

A training curriculum which consists of 28 to 30 hours of instruction is required of every individual interested in becoming an adoptive parent. Several consecutive weeks of training are offered with social workers and trained foster/adoptive parents as instructors. Panels of former foster children, adoptive and/or foster parents provide additional insight of parenting children from the foster care system. Also other specialists such as therapists, mental and physical health clinicians, etc. offer information during the training.

### **Step 4: Application**

Some agencies will offer the application at the beginning of the training and others will offer it at the end of the training. Application forms vary from agency to agency. Do not be put off by the personal questions on the application. Complete it, sign it, and return it to the agency. The social worker will explain during the home study how the information you provided will help to determine the kind of child that will fit best in your family.

### **Step 5: Home Study (Mutual Assessment)**

During the home study, you will talk about your reasons for wanting to adopt and the types of child your family can best parent. The social worker will talk about the special demands of parenting an adopted child. All members of your family including your adult children will be involved.

The home study will be completed through a series of meetings-individual or group. At the conclusion of the home study, you and the social worker will decide whether you are ready to adopt and what type of child you can best parent.

**Remember:**

The social worker is not looking for families without problems. The worker is looking for families who have successfully coped with life experiences.

### **Step 6: Selection**

The social worker will show you pictures of available children and tell you about each child. There are also listings of waiting children available on [WWW.ADOPTUSKID.ORG](http://WWW.ADOPTUSKID.ORG). When you find a child you are interested in, together, you and the child's agency will consider whether your family may be right for this child.

Deciding against adopting a particular child will not prevent you from being considered for other children.

### **Step 7: Placement**

The placement process starts with visits between the child and the family. The number of visits before actual placement depends on the child's speed in being able to move into a new situation. When the social worker feels that the child is ready to move and that the family is ready to receive the child, arrangements are made for placement in the adoptive home.

### **Step 8: Supervision (Post Placement)**

After the child is placed in your home, the social worker will visit you at least three times. The visits are to help you and the child adjust to this new situation. It helps you to assume your new role as parents. This is the time to talk with the worker about any concerns you may have.

Initial adjustment concerns are to be expected. Talk about them early on: waiting too long may cause problems later. The Virginia law requires the child to live in your home a minimum of 6 months and be visited at least 3 times or more, before the adoption can be finalized.

### **Step 9: Legal Procedures & Finalization**

To finalize the adoption, it is best to get an attorney. The attorney will file a petition for adoption with the court. The court will request a report from the agency. The agency sends the report and the judge enters the final order of adoption.